



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

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## Mexico

### Poultry and Products

## Mexico Establishes Listeria Testing Requirement

2002

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**Report Highlights:**

The Government of Mexico recently established a listeria testing procedure for "hamburgers, nuggets, cold cuts, or any other prepared chicken and turkey product ready for human consumption." The testing procedure will take 4-12 working days, however, shipments will be permitted to enter prior to the receipt of final test results. Exporters should plan on this procedure being in place indefinitely.

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Includes PSD Changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Mexico [MX1], [MX]

On November 27, 2002, Mexico's Secretariat of Agriculture (SAGARPA) informed the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) via letter that it was going to implement a testing program for listeria in response to recent detections of listeria in the United States. The letter defines the products to be tested as "hamburgers, nuggets, cold cuts, or any other prepared chicken and turkey product ready for human consumption." Comment: The Office of Agricultural Affairs (OAA) understands SAGARPA's use of the word "hamburger" to mean chicken and/or turkey burgers in this case.

The FSIS letter contained few details about the testing procedure, however, the OAA has obtained copies of the instructions sent to SAGARPA border inspectors on November 29 and December 5, which provide additional details about the testing procedure. A summary follows:

1. Inspectors should verify that imported products comply with all sanitary requirements.
2. Inspectors will take a 250 gram sample per lot in accordance with SAGARPA procedures. Comment: SAGARPA has clarified verbally that samples will be taken from each lot.
3. Importation will be authorized immediately for products that comply with sanitary requirements and have been sampled for listeria testing. Comment: SAGARPA has clarified verbally that imported products may be sold or marketed prior to receipt of the listeria test results.
4. Samples will be sent to one of four laboratories. Comment: SAGARPA indicates that testing will take 4-12 working days.
5. In the event of a positive test result, the Secretariat of Health will be notified. The health law is general, however, it appears that the Secretariat would have several options, such as recall, destruction, or the imposition of penalties, depending on the amount and location of the affected product. Additionally, the next shipment from the U.S. plant in which the positive sample originated will be held at the border for up to 30 days, pending the results of the listeria test. If the test results are negative, the product will be permitted to enter. If positive, the shipment will be rejected. Comment: SAGARPA has indicated verbally that this procedure will apply to a subsequent shipment or shipments from a particular plant until results are negative.
6. All positive results will be posted at authorized ports of entry.
7. All costs associated with the testing are the responsibility of the importer.

It is not clear how long this procedure will be in place. The SAGARPA letter to FSIS states that "Once the risk is lowered in sufficient degree, we will return to the normal inspection procedures." This implies that the testing procedure may be temporary, however, we recommend that exporters prepare for this procedure to be in place indefinitely. Additionally, we recommend that exporters work closely with their importers to verify and clarify the procedures outlined above.